

Syllabus for PHIL 1090/ THEO 1090 – Perspectives on Western Culture I

Spring 2021	Instructor: Katie Rapier Office Hours: M 2-3:30pm & by appointment Email: katie.rapier@bc.edu (24 hours to reply, M-F) Phone: (617) 804-5487 Classrooms: Canvas and Zoom Class Hours: MWF 1-1:50PM, T 6-8:30PM
--------------------	--

Course Website:

Canvas: <https://bostoncollege.instructure.com/courses/1612228>

Zoom: bccte.zoom.us

Instagram: @ProfessorRapier (optional)

Course Description:

Continuing the journey through Western thought, students will engage readings from modern and American philosophy as well as 19th-21st century theology through careful analytical writing and in discussion with peers, the professor, and general lectures. Supplemental materials will feature cross-cultural and interdisciplinary readings. This course also makes use of student submissions and multi-media to enrich the learning experience.

Learning Objectives:

In this course students will learn to (1) critically engage historical and contemporary authors through careful reading and class discussion; (2) form meaningful connections between seminal works in philosophy and theology; (3) produce a clear and compelling argumentative essay on an original topic inspired by course material.

Required Materials:

All texts available online or through O'Neill Library course reserves

- *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant, Gregor and Timmerman (Eds.), [ISBN: 9781107401068]
- *Walden*, Thoreau, Cramer (Ed.) [ISBN: 9780300110081]
- *Utilitarianism*, Mill, Sher (Ed.) [ISBN: 9780872206052] OPTIONAL* (available via eBook through BC Libraries)

If you need financial assistance obtaining the readings please contact the instructor or BC's Montserrat Office (<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/offices/mission-ministry/sites/montserrat.html>). Some texts will also be on reserve at O'Neill Library.

***If you choose to purchase these materials via Amazon, please consider using Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com) to donate a portion of your purchase to a charity of your choice ***

Other Materials:

- All PDFs are available via Canvas (see above) under the weekly Module. *Please print these readings and bring them to class or download them to your device (no phones).*
- Videos and other media: students may be asked to watch videos or other media prior to class. These will be posted on Canvas under the weekly Module.

Required Technology:

- 6-8 Hours of High-Speed Internet Per Week
- Canvas
- Microsoft Word (free for BC students, <https://www.bc.edu/software/applications/office.html>)
- Webcam and Audio
- Zoom (bccte.zoom.us)
- YouTube
- Google Suite (available via BC Email)

Recording Information:

All Zoom classes will be recorded. The instructor will upload all recordings to Canvas so that students can review the material and discussion. Only the instructor and students currently enrolled in Professor Rapier's section of the course will be able to view the recordings. ***The instructor will seek student permission to share any recordings with individuals outside the class.*** Office hours and scheduled meetings will not be recorded. If a student objects to this recording policy they should contact the instructor immediately.

Assessment

Participation: Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the weekly readings, lectures, and any other materials (videos, websites, etc.) uploaded to the weekly module. **Readings (standard texts and supplementary) should be completed at the beginning of the week** If you cannot attend a scheduled live discussion please contact the professor ASAP. If you are experiencing technical difficulties, please inform the instructor and contact Boston College Information

Technology Services (<https://www.bc.edu/offices/its.html>) for assistance. Please be mindful of other students to allow everyone an opportunity to express their opinions.

Discussion Groups: Each student will be expected to attend small group discussion Wednesday or Friday, and full class discussions Monday and Tuesdays. You will be asked to indicate your preference between Wednesday and Friday discussions. **If a student is unable to attend live sessions, they can contact the professor for alternate arrangements.**

Comprehension Checks: These assignments are designed to enhance your understanding of the texts. Assignments will include quizzes, discussion questions, and other activities related to the reading. All comprehension checks will be posted in the modules on Canvas.

Common Lecture Posts: For each of the three common lectures students are expected to **post THREE times** in a discussion board on Canvas. One post should summarize the student's thoughts and opinions on the lecture. This post should be charitable to the speaker but can be critical of the presentation. The post should be several sentences long. The other two posts should be replies to peers. These posts should engage meaningfully with ongoing discussion and should also be several sentences long to receive full credit. The instructor will provide an example on Canvas.

Moral Exercise Reflections: Students will indicate their preference among four groups. Each group will focus on one virtue (or two related virtues). All students will cultivate the group virtue through practice. Groups will meet every other Tuesday during the last 30 minutes of class. Groups will be assigned discussion questions (available via Google Docs and posted on Canvas) and group meetings will be recorded to assess participation. Students will receive credit for participating in group meetings and will be expected to produce a visual representation of their virtue development at the end of the semester.

Final Essay: The bulk of the grade in this course will come from the final essay. The essay should be approximately 15 pages double-spaced, 12-point standard font. Students may choose any topic or author discussed in the fall or spring section of the course.* Specific requirements about citations, structure, and content will be distributed and posted on Canvas. Part of the student's grade for this assignment will be calculated by completing scaffolded assignments that build up to the essay.

Topic Submission (2/26): 50pts	Section 1 (4/19): 50pts
Annotated Bibliography (3/22): 50pts	Rough Draft Exchange (4/23 & 4/28): 100pts
Outline (4/1): 50pts	Final Essay (5/12): 150pts

*Students are encouraged to choose topics eligible for the Schiller Institute’s Student Challenge: Grappling with Environmental Racism if interested. Students can apply for funding through this initiative. Contact Professor Rapier if interested.

Final Essay Presentation: In the last week of class students will present the main argument of their final essay to a group of classmates via Zoom. Students will prepare one Google slide (no animations) and summarize their research in 2-5 minutes. Students will be graded on their preparedness and ability to present their arguments orally. The professor will distribute a rubric on Canvas.

Exams: There are two exams in this course. The first will cover all the material in the “Primer in Modern Philosophy” section and will be administered in class. The second exam will cover material from the “Experiencing Religion” class. The exams may feature some short answer or fill in the blank items but will consist primarily of essay questions to promote critical engagement of course materials. Potential essay questions will be distributed prior to each exam.

Grade Calculation:

- Participation: 20%
- Common Lecture Posts: 5%
- Moral Exercise Reflection: 20%
- Final Essay: 30%
- Final Essay Presentation: 5%
- Exams: 20%

Attendance and Lateness Policy

Deadlines for short and extended argumentative essays are posted on the syllabus. Essays should be submitted via Canvas. Moral exercise journals will be due on Fridays via Canvas and posted on the syllabus. Common Lecture discussion posts are due the Friday after the lecture on Canvas. Missed exams cannot be made up unless the student discusses options with the instructor prior to missing class.

Absolutely no late work will be accepted.

Exceptions for Illness: If you are unwell, please seek medical attention. Your health is more important than class attendance. If you miss class or an assignment please let the instructor know as soon as possible. You will be expected to make up the missed work or complete an alternate assignment when you are feeling well. *Please do your best to communicate with the instructor when you miss class for health reasons.*

Classroom Policies

Do not text during Zoom discussions. I strongly recommend closing all other tabs when using Zoom to increase connectivity and to promote engagement in course discussion. Ideally you will be able to find a quiet place for Zoom sessions but I understand that this is not always possible. **It is important to arrive on time** or before class starts so that you do not interrupt class discussion.

Academic Integrity

“The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the University and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others’ work as one’s own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but it also undermines the educational process.” (quoted from Boston College’s Policies and Procedures Website).

All violations of this policy will be reported to the academic integrity officer. Particularly relevant to this course, the final essay and reflection essays will be monitored for plagiarism. Students should not collaborate on assignments or essays. We will review the policy in class and students are encouraged to refer to the policy on the University’s website:

https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/academics/sites/university-catalog/policies-procedures.html#academic_integrity_policies

If a student is suspected of an academic integrity violation, the instructor will contact the appropriate authorities within the student’s degree program.

Accommodations

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities can request different kinds of accommodations. To learn more, please visit: https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/subsidiary_offices/disabilityservices.html. If you need accommodations for learning disabilities and ADHD, please contact Kathy Duggan at dugganka@bc.edu (617-552-8093) at the Connors Family Learning. If you need accommodations for any other kind of disability (including temporary disabilities) please contact Rory Stein at rory.stein@bc.edu (617-552-3470) in the Disability Service Office. Make sure you contact these offices early in the semester to make sure you get the help you need. Please let the instructor know if you are having trouble accessing accommodations in a timely manner.

Accommodations Based Upon Sexual Assault: Boston College is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are survivors of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they

seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to the Title IX Office (<https://www.bc.edu/offices/diversity/compliance/TitleIX.html>). The Title IX Office is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate administration and faculty. The professor for this course is not a confidential resource and is required to report to the Title IX Office.

Other Resources:

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center: 800-841-8371

Newton-Wellesley Hospital's Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Program:
617-243-6521

Victim Rights Law Center: 617-399-6720

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): 800-656-HOPE (4673)

Bias Reporting: BC has a process through which students, faculty, staff, and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination.

See: https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/bias_response.html

Mental Health: University Counseling Services work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression.

See: <https://www.bc.edu/offices/counseling>

Schedule

*All assignments are subject to change. Please check the course website regularly.

PART IV: A PRIMER IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Friday, January 28th

Modern Philosophy

Reading: Descartes, *Discourse on Method* "Part One"

Assignment: Moral Exercise Reflection Preference

(<https://forms.gle/5LjhxA4oh6N3SDpu8>) due by midnight

Week of February 1st:

Modern Philosophy

Reading: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* "Meditations I-III"; Princess Elizabeth's Letters to Descartes; hooks, "Overcoming White Supremacy: A Comment"

Video: Doorbells and Dualism: On Descartes' *Meditations*

Week of February 1st (continued):

Supplementary: Pryor, "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper"

Moral Exercise Reflection (MER): Discussion Questions #1

Assignment: Reflection on hooks due Friday, February 5th by 11:59pm

Week of February 8th:

Modern Philosophy

Readings: Locke, "On Toleration"

Supplementary: Globe, Editorials on Child Vaccinations and Religious Exemption

Activity: How to Think About Paper Topics

Week of February 15th:

Modern Philosophy

Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism* "Chapter II: What Utilitarianism Is"

Supplementary: Selections from Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do*

Video: "Utilitarianism," "Peter Singer: The why and how of effective altruism"

Assignment: Utilitarianism in Popular Culture due Friday, February 19th by 11:59p

MER: Discussion Questions #2

Week of February 22nd:

Modern Philosophy

Reading: Bacon, "On Goodness, and Goodness of Nature," "Of Studies," "Sphinx, or Science" and choose one other essay

(https://www.gutenberg.org/files/56463/56463-h/56463-h.htm#Page_105)

Common Lecture: Vandewall, "Francis Bacon's Utopia: Is Everything Better with Bacon?" (during class Tuesday)

Assignments: Vandewall Common Lecture Discussion Post and Topic Proposal due by Friday, February 26th by 11:59pm

MER: Discussion Questions #3 (first part of class Tuesday)

Week of March 1st: (Monday only, watch videos T, Th or F)

Modern Philosophy

Readings: Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (pgs. 3-20)

Video: Intro to Kant and the *Groundwork*

Supplementary: Film, *The Farwell* (2019) [on own Tuesday]

Common Lecture: Troxell, "Kantian Ethics" [on own Thursday/Friday]

Assignment: Troxell Common Lecture Discussion Posts due Friday, March 5th

Week of March 8th:

Modern Philosophy

Readings: Kant, *Groundwork* (pgs. 20-29) and (start at bottom of 43-52 at 4:44); "Perspectives II: Thoughts on Library Research"

Activity: Exam 1 Review Session, Research with O'Neill Library (W/F)

Assignment: Exam Review Question due before class Tuesday, March 9th; Topic Sentence and Questions due by end of class Tuesday, March 9th

MER: Discussion Questions #4

PART V: EXPERIENCING RELIGION

Monday, March 15th:

Experiencing Religion: St. Ignatius

Readings: Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* (I and II)

(<http://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/SpiritualExercises/Puhl>)

Tuesday, March 16th:

Exam 1 due by midnight (no class)

Wednesday/Friday March 17th or 19th:

Experiencing Religion

Activity: Burns Library Research in Class W/F

Video: Behnegar Common Lecture on Locke (on own)

Assignment: Common Lecture Discussion Post by Friday, March 19th at 11:59PM

Week of March 22nd:

Experiencing Religion: Kierkegaard

Reading: Selections from Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* Problem II (pg. 59-71)

Supplementary: Sample Outlines and Expectations

Video: Kierkegaard on Abraham and Isaac, Outline Guide

Assignment: Annotated Bibliography due Monday, March 22nd by 11:59pm

MER: Discussion Questions #5

Week of March 29th:

Experiencing Religion: Environment

Readings: Selections from Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (pgs. 1-14; 39-44; 49-65);

Insua, "To Protect All Life, We Must End Coal"

Video: Theology of the Earth

Assignment: Outline due Thursday, April 1st by 11:59pm

Friday, April 2nd: NO CLASS (everyone attend Wednesday)

Week of April 5th:

Experiencing Religion: Social Justice

Readings: Marx, "Money, and the Alienated Man;" Gutiérrez, "The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ"

Video: Theological Socialism?

Activity: Exam 2 Review

Assignment: Exam 2 Proposed Questions due Wednesday, April 7th by 11:59pm

MER: Discussion Questions #6

PART VI: CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN THOUGHT

Monday, April 12th:

Video: Common Lecture TBA (in class)

Tuesday, April 13th:

Exam 2 due by midnight (no class)

Wednesday/Friday April 14th/16th:

Contemporary American Thought: Thoreau

Readings: Thoreau, *Walden* (selections); Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

Video: Philosophy Paper Writing Tips

Activities: Walking with Walden (TBA)

Assignment: Common Lecture Discussion Posts due Friday, April 16th by 11:59pm

Week of April 19th:

Contemporary American Thought: Civil Rights

Readings: MLK, "The Other America"

Video: "The Other America" (MLK at Stanford), Giving Good Feedback

Assignments: Section 1 due via Canvas by Monday, April 19th at 11:59pm, Draft to partner (at least five paragraphs) by Friday, April 23rd at 11:59pm

MER: Discussion Questions #7

Week of April 26th:

Contemporary American Thought: Civil Rights

Readings: hooks, "Global Feminism" and "Ending Violence"

Video: Presentation Guide

Assignment: Feedback to partner by Wednesday, April 28th at 11:59pm; hooks and King: Same Dream? Discussion due Friday, April 30th by 11:59pm

Week of May 3rd:

Presentations

Readings: TBA

Assignment/Activity: Presentations as scheduled Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday; Visual Representation of Virtue Development due Wednesday, May 5th by midnight

MER: Presentation of Visual Representation of Virtue Development to Group

Friday, May 7th – No class, study day

Final Essay Due Wednesday, May 12th at 12noon